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Bacon Academy's Riley Anderson, a CT State Open champ as a freshman, continues her family's swimming legacy

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PUBLISHED: September 21, 2023 at 5:57 p.m. | UPDATED: September 21, 2023 at 6:49 p.m.

MANCHESTER – Her grandfather coached the Manchester Swim Club team and was the boys swim coach at Manchester High. Her father swam at Manchester High.

Her coach now, Molly O'Connor, who competed with the swim club , remembers Riley Anderson as a baby, her father Sean bringing her to practice.

Now Riley, who lives in Colchester, has come full circle. She is a sophomore at Bacon Academy who swims with the Manchester High co-op team.

Last year, as a freshman, Riley won the State Open 50 free title and broke the Class S state record in the event. Her father Sean also won the State Open 50 free title in 1992 and 1993 and broke the Class S record when he was in high school. Sean's record (21.42) still stands.

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“Swimming is in Riley’s genetics,” O’Connor said.

Her grandfather Ron is in the Manchester Sports Hall of Fame. Her father swam at Penn State and UMass and also at Manchester, like Riley, even though he was a student at RHAM High. Her older sister Avery swam with Riley for Bacon Academy last year, with two others, as a four-person team, but this year, Avery is running cross country at Bacon.

“You just want them to become lifelong swimmers, not necessarily super competitive, but it made sense,” Sean said. “Once she started doing it, you can just kind of tell if a kid is going to be better than average. She got fast pretty quick.”

Riley grew up swimming. Her dad and grandfather coached her; so did O’Connor. She started competing at age 6. At first, she didn’t love it.

“I don’t know, as I kept doing it, it got more fun,” she said. “I met a bunch of people. You make so many friends and you become good at it.”

So when she arrived at Manchester, O’Connor knew exactly what she was getting.

“When she came in last year, I was super excited about her being here,” O’Connor said. “Then she killed it.

“The times she’s doing, her performances, that’s something you would expect out of a senior. For her to come in as a freshman and make that big of a wave, peoples’ jaws were dropped.”

Bacon competed in Class S and Riley won the 50 free (23.20), breaking the record (23.74) set in 2015. She won the 100 fly title in 56.41 and she and her sister and Sophia and Isabella Falkowski finished second in the 200 free relay and third in the 400 free relay.

She shone brighter at the State Open, beating Glastonbury senior Riley Kudlac, who had finished third in the Open the year before, finishing in 23.07.

“The 50 is such a close race, it can go any way,” Riley said. “We all had like the exact same times; it’s just hundredths of a second that separate you.

Riley hadn't even tapered for the Open because she was competing in national meets for USA Swimming after the high school season.

This year, her goal is to drop her 50 time to 22.5 (her personal best is 22.9).

"The 50 is really hard to drop time because it's so short," she said.

Meanwhile, she's enjoying her time with her high school team.

"She's the girl every coach wants on their team, not just because she's fast," O'Connor said. "She works hard in practice, she takes the corrections you give her and she actually does them, something that I didn't realize until I swam in college.

"She's fun to have as a teammate on deck but she zones in and gets the job done. She puts on this focus face. She's a completely different person when she's racing."

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